



Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay-Per Click (PPC) Advertising

Every web developer, web design shop, advertising agency, and anyone who knows anything about websites, automatically knows how search engines work, how to optimize sites, and they promise you more visibility, right? It's one thing to possess some knowledge of how a website works and some of the things that search engines look for, but do they know how to produce and measure results? Better yet, can they properly set expectations and optimize based on the specific goals you are looking to accomplish?

The Internet is a fluid thing and always changing. That means your SEO resource has to be researching and paying attention to trends while attending industry events and keeping themselves ahead of or at least on the curve to maximize your results. Most experts talk about how "parity" has been reached in search by the different sources – but how they determine the best match for search results is a constantly changing thing and doing optimization once does not set you up "forever" – search engines change algorithms and ranking factors an average of once per year.

Our experience shows that 80% of people who say they offer these services don't know what they are doing or actually "outsource" this work to someone else. If they promise instant SEO results – that is generally not possible following ethical practices. If you are starting from a near zero presence on the web, it is easy to improve your rankings. However, what are your expectations? What do you want to accomplish? What happens if you already have traffic and rank?



Here are some things to think about when selecting your SEO partner:

Open-Ended Communications – Your comfort level with the staff is very important to who you select. How well they explain the process, how it works, what you can expect and what they will be doing as part of the project will affect how comfortable you are with them.

Budget Properly – Expectations have to be aligned with your budget. You should NEVER spend more than you are comfortable with. Start with something reasonable and commit more once results are proven. Ongoing optimization of your site and campaigns will result in better ROI as your budget increases. This should be their approach.

Use of Analytics – This is a free tool from Google™ and it can measure everything that happens on your site. How visitors got there, what keyword drove them there, geographic regions, and how they use your site are all measureable if this tool is set up properly. This is real-time research and will help drive conversions and potentially your whole marketing strategy.

Quality Score – One of the newest entries into the mix. Search engines want to send you to relevant results – that is a positive user experience. How well Google determines your site or landing URL to be a match for a keyword or phrase will affect your campaign. The highest bidder is not always first and a good quality score will actually LOWER your cost-per-click charges and the position your campaign can achieve. (Ask for our white paper on quality score)

Keywords/Phrases vs. your "brand" – You need to own your company name and brand and optimize for that. You should not be wasting keyword dollars on people bidding on your brand. The focus should be on ranking for "keyphrase" not "your name + key phrase". If you naturally/organically rank on first page – does

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it say what you want? Ad copy should reflect that organic rank and be more promotional. If you sell products they should be talking about “Google Base”.

This is a Marathon Not a Sprint – For every action, there is a reaction – especially in Pay-Per-Click. Once you start running, everyone who was there will “optimize” based on the landscape changing. This is why successful campaigns need constant attention to their rank, quality score, performance etc. SEO is especially something that will take 90-180 days to see real results (unless you are new or have no search equity currently).

Simplify Conversions – Make it as simple as possible to get information from a visitor. Use e-mail sign ups (micro-conversions) or conversion forms on the “landing pages” of the campaign so it is easy for someone to sign up. With good optimization, you will have people enter your site from the page they are looking for and not the home page or contact page. Don’t make them hunt to sign up or contact you – put your phone number and e-mail sign up on EVERY page which will help you build your list and leads.

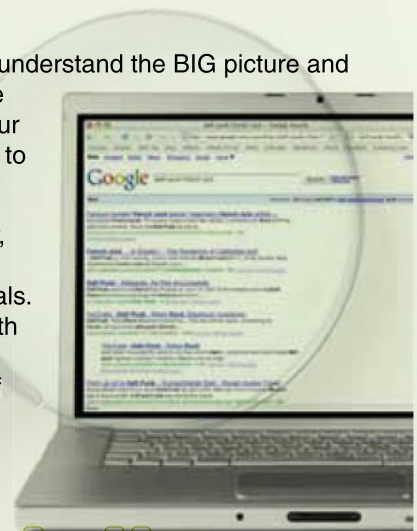
Social Media – The “buzz” words. Twitter, Blogs, Facebook etc...These are simple ways to help increase exposure and show that your company is hip and cool. These are viral and fresh, especially for promotions. Still more consumer oriented, but they have their place for B2B types as well. Don’t use these if you don’t plan to update them regularly. It will hurt you more than help you.

How is Your Account Set Up? – Will you own all of your data? Can you login and look at your accounts? Can you take over managing your site or access your data if you ever need to part ways with your provider? What kind of reporting will you get and how will it measure against your specific goals?

Fee Structure – Is their model set up so they get a percentage of your spend? That provides incentive for them to get you to spend more and does not align with maximum ROI. What are they doing on a monthly SEO “retainer”? How long are you committed to them when you begin this? You should be re-doing ad copy, landing pages and keeping your campaign fresh every 6-10 weeks. And if your budget allows, you should be testing landing pages for conversion ratios and constantly improving your campaigns.

Understanding of General Marketing – In order to maximize results, you need to understand the BIG picture and this is the entire media mix. How does each piece feed off one another to maximize your ROI? What other kinds of online marketing can you put into the mix to help your PPC performance and search rankings? These are talking points as you get closer to defining your objectives, goals, and budgets.

Success for one does NOT ensure success for someone else. Every client, industry, product, service, key phrase and word is different and has a different set of people going after it on the Internet. Every plan needs to be specific and based on your goals. Your website and structure should be unique to how your site is built and aligned with what you want to accomplish. Many individuals or less-experienced firms will talk about and sell only what they have and know rather than follow best practices. All of the above should be in your discussion with your SEO partner.



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